



NEWSLETTER  
Viola da Gamba Society--New England  
March 2021

Dear VdGS-NE Community,

I hope this newsletter finds you safe and well, perhaps even vaccinated. This everlasting pandemic sure is testing our patience! However, it appears that there is light at the end of the tunnel. Vaccination roll-out is happening, albeit frustratingly slow here where I live. We have to keep believing that at some point this extraordinary time will be behind us and appear like a bad dream...

In my first pandemic letter I touched on all the ways the pandemic has affected us as musicians and music lovers. We do so crave live music! Even so we are so grateful for the creative ways in which musicians have brought us concerts on-line. The VdGS-NE Board has met the challenge in amazing ways, working much harder than under normal circumstances, ushering the VdGS-NE into the digital age, in ways that might not have happened as thoroughly without the pandemic, and that just might be here to stay! I would like to thank all the board members for their commitment, support, creative ideas and solutions for problems, volunteering and hosting of on-line sessions.

Our "Practice Saturdays" are weekly virtual practice rooms started in October 2020. Oftentimes 10-15 people log on for the session. It is great to be connected this way, seeing the others in their little Zoom windows, as we practice our own music. The last half hour we unmute and catch up with each other, discussing topics musical or otherwise. I encourage you to try it if you haven't yet. Thank you to board member Glen Legere for arranging the hosting schedule, morning sessions, and sending the weekly reminders and Zoom links.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you can read more about recent on-line "Special Topics Classes"

that have taken place once a month since last November. The opportunity to present teachers from outside our area, the low cost of participation, the limited time commitment and convenience of taking a class while staying at home have made these classes popular and successful. We hope to keep these classes as a regular feature of VdGS-NE offerings, even after our traditional in-person workshops resume. (Our first in person workshop may be possible in the late fall of this year.)

Recently we have also explored a stronger social media presence through listing and boosting our events on Facebook. This has brought people from as far as Texas and England to our on-line classes. Our website gives up-to-date information about our activities, and allows for on-line class registration and payment.

The VdGS-NE will be joining the VdGSA in an effort to diversify our membership and reach out to communities of color. An advisory committee is forming to help us define ways in which we can do that. The Board would like to invite members with interest, expertise or ideas in this area to take a seat on this committee.

Lately our society has seen its membership drop. It may be pandemic-related; however, we also have few younger members joining. The board has recently begun look at ways to introduce new players to the viol and to the society. We have recently instituted a free three-month introductory viol rental as part of our Martha Davidson Scholarship Fund.

And this brings me to a difficult and very sad announcement. On March 14 we lost our treasured Corresponding Secretary Martha

Davidson, who suffered for three years from a progressive lung disease and finally perished from it. Martha has been one of the backbones of the society. Having been on the Board of Directors since the 1980s, her institutional memory and support of the proceedings of the board were phenomenal. She was one of our rocks. We extend our love and sympathy to Hannah Davidson, our Recording Secretary. Hannah will, for now, take on the duties of the Corresponding Secretary as well. Given Martha's history and stature within the Society we imagine that many of you have memories of her. We would like to invite you to write a few words if you care to; please send to [hrdavidson39@gmail.com](mailto:hrdavidson39@gmail.com) (Newsletter Editor) for a potential memorial addendum to our next newsletter. Once we can safely gather, we can hope for a celebration of viol consort playing, in memory of Martha and others!

I hope to see you at the Annual Meeting on Saturday May 8 at 4:30! It will take place on Zoom, after the May Special Topics Class. You will receive a notice closer to the time, as well as a ballot for election of board members. It will be my last meeting as president, as I will step down from my post at the end of this VdGS-NE year. And so this may or may not be the last time that I will sign off with

Give your viol a few (bow) strokes from me,  
Anne Legêne

## **SAVE THE DATES!**

### **UPCOMING SPECIAL TOPICS CLASSES:**

**Saturday April 17, 3:00 – 4:30 PM**

“Beginner Tablature for the Viol” with John Mark Rozendaal

**Saturday May 8, 3:00 – 4:30 PM**

Play Trios with Rosamund Morley and Larry Lipnik

### **ANNUAL MEETING**

**Saturday May 8, 4:30 PM.**

Zoom link will be sent closer to the date.

## **VDGS-NE IS SEEKING NEW BOARD MEMBERS!**

If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else to the Board, please contact Jane Hershey: [janelhershey@gmail.com](mailto:janelhershey@gmail.com)

## **PARTICIPATE IN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY**

To support efforts to diversify VdGS-NE membership and reach out to communities of color, an advisory committee is forming to help define effective ways to achieve that goal. The Board would like to invite members with interest, expertise or ideas to take a seat on this committee. Please contact [alegene@simons-rock.edu](mailto:alegene@simons-rock.edu) for more information and to volunteer.

### **Beatrice Asken**

Maine has lost a wonderful musician:

Beatrice (Bea) Asken died of Covid-19 on December 30, 2020. She was 91 years old.

Bea was an accomplished musician and was an active participant in her communities in Connecticut and Maine, both musically and as a volunteer. She is remembered by her family and many friends as a gentle soul who accepted everyone for who they were, and spread love and kindness wherever she went. Bea traveled many miles in any direction to play violas da gamba, recorders, modern viola and to sing.

Her grandchildren have created an excellent memorial website for her at

[www.mykeeper.com/profile/BeatriceAsken](http://www.mykeeper.com/profile/BeatriceAsken).

Barbara Oliver

I knew Bea as a member of our annual Early Music camp at the World Fellowship Center in Conway, NH. As a faithful participant for many years, she was valued by all of us - generous and capable, and incredibly supportive and positive. I loved reading her recent quote by Spinoza, “The only thing is that you are here, that you are alive, that this world is full of wonders.” Bea’s personality and smile came flooding back like warm sunshine. We will miss her, and value our memories of making music with her.

Jane Hershey

Lovely, wonderful Bea, with her sweet equanimity and sparkle in her eye... a true peace maker, full of joy, energy and wisdom. She was a

remarkable person, a light, a shining example of profound humanity. And a wonderful musician!  
Anne Legêne

### Special Topics Classes

On Jan. 23, 2021, Mary Springfels introduced us to the six exquisite canons that make up Guillaume de Machaut's 'Le Lay de la fonteinne.' A rare treat for tenor viol players, these canons were all pitched in a resonant and comfortable range: the melodies and rhythms all fell naturally under the fingers and were easy to hear. Mary had us read all six of the 'chaces' in unison, to get a feel for the style, to hear their distinctive qualities, and become fluent in Machaut's wonderful rhythmic variety. Then we went back through and had a couple of chances to play each in 3-part canon.

Zoom was a good medium for being introduced to this material, as the character of each melody stayed in the foreground, with the effect of the canon somewhat diminished in comparison to what it might have been playing in person. As pure instrumental music, this was a complete delight, and Mary's guidance made it a thoroughly enjoyable and refreshing change of pace for many of us used to a steady diet of later music.

Tina Chancey's Special Topic in February was 'Make your Viol Sing.' Playing convincing and expressive melodies is the business of every viol consort player, whether the repertoire is vocally conceived or purely instrumental in character. Tina explored with us two of Thomas Campian's most beloved lute songs, 'Follow thy fair sun, unhappy shadow' and 'I care not for these ladies.' She emphasized the importance of relaxed arm weight to create a full sound, and to respond to the dramatic images of 'Follow thy fair sun,' and the playfulness of 'I care not.' We worked on keeping good contact between bow and string, and varying bow speed and articulation to express the sound and meaning of these gems of Elizabethan poetry. Tina's work with us was inspiring, and reminded us that our bows can imitate the perfection of the voice if we relax and listen!

~Jane Hershey

The special topics class on March 21 was on fingering options for the treble viol, by Catharina Meints. She started with some finger independence and strengthening exercises learned from Hannelore Müller (who worked with August Wenzinger) and which Ms Meints does daily, away from the viol. We then moved on to some general comments on treble technique, hand

position when using chromatic and diatonic fingering, reasons for choosing one or the other fingerings, and practiced these on scales together. The class concluded with a careful examination of fingering choices in the

treble parts of consorts by Gibbons, Ward and Purcell, which we all played along with Ms Meints, as well as some discussion of bowing techniques for different colors. Ms Meints advocates using a combination of chromatic and diatonic fingering, which requires some forethought as to which will work best in a given situation. Throughout the class, Ms Meints sprinkled in comments about her own history with the treble and took questions from the participants. 15 people attended (one from England!) and everyone participated. The class was educational, engaging, and very well received.  
~Mai-Lan Broekman

### FREE INTRODUCTORY VIOL RENTAL

#### Calling all aspiring viol players!

The Martha Davidson Scholarship Fund is a resource for help in renting your first viol! The VdGS-NE supports new players of any age, regardless of need, with a \$100 grant toward a three-month Introductory Rental for a treble, tenor, or bass viol to be arranged through the Powers Music School in Belmont, MA. We hope that trying out a viol for free for 3 months will motivate new players to continue to play. Members are encouraged to invite interested friends and students to make use of this offer!

To apply, go to

<http://vdgsne.org/martha-davidson-scholarship-fund/>

Or e-mail Sybil Kevy at [thebarbate@gmail.com](mailto:thebarbate@gmail.com)

### Silbiger Grant Concert

St Andrews Church in Marblehead, Mass is excited to host the Silbiger Grant concert on June 20 at 7pm. St Andrews is the place on the North shore of Boston for great music! We regularly have Evensong, Early Music, Popular Music and Classical Music concerts throughout the year, indoors and outside.

The Jubilate Chamber Choir, which consists of eight Boston based singers, will be joining the El Dorado Consort to perform a concert of music by Orlando Gibbons, Thomas Tallis, William Byrd and others of that time. Orlando Gibbons' "The Cries of London" will be the featured composition. The "Cries," for viols and voices, replicates what London in the 1500's might have sounded like, evoking fishmongers, fruit sellers, writing implements, waistcoats, silk garters and a lost mare; all sung out by the singers, in a wonderful cacophony of sound and rhythm, while the viols weave a more austere fantasy based on the In Nomine.

The rest of the concert consists of secular pieces of sprightly spring music sung by Jubilate, along with consort music for the viols.

The chapel at St Andrews is an intimate space with fine acoustics for Early Music and small groups. The church, built 100 years ago, features beautiful windows. St Andrews will be taking reservations for this concert on our website and there will be a nominal ticket charge of \$15 dollars a person.

Mary Jodice

### **VdGS-NE Online Practice Sessions**

Feeling all alone when you practice?  
Want to practice but just can't get started?  
Would having some company help?  
Back by popular demand, the VdGS-NE Saturday Zoom Practice Sessions!  
FREE, no-risk, no-commitment!  
Contact [galegere@comcast.com](mailto:galegere@comcast.com) to be included in the mailing list

### **Concert Announcements**

#### **For as Many as Will: A Tour of English Country Dance**

Premiered March 19 at 7:30pm  
Currently available on  
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/c/SevenTimesSalt>

In this brand new video presentation, Seven Times Salt takes a tour of English country dances through the centuries, from the first edition of *The English Dancing Master* to the present day. We explore a splendid variety of dance tunes in their many guises, from court masques and Elizabethan taverns to Purcell's opera house and the finest Regency ballrooms. In addition to our original arrangements for broken consort, you'll hear versions of ECDs as cittern solos, bagpipe airs, divisions for violin and viol, broadside ballads, and more. Includes newly filmed material and samples from past performances, all on period instruments. You can also sing along on a couple of tunes! Presented by Country Dance Society Boston.

Seven Times Salt: Karen Burciaga - violin, harp, guitar, voice; Dan Meyers - recorder, flute, uilleann pipes, percussion, voice; Josh Schreiber Shalem - bass viol, voice; Matthew Wright - lute, cittern, bandora, voice

FREE; donations gratefully accepted.

CDS -  
Boston <https://www.cds-boston.org/get-involved/donate>  
Seven Times Salt  
<https://fundraising.fracturedatlas.org/seven-times-salt> or  
PayPal to [inquiries@seventimessalt.com](mailto:inquiries@seventimessalt.com)

Watch on  
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/c/SevenTimesSalt>  
or Facebook <https://facebook.com/seventimessalt>  
Video will remain available for later viewing.

Thursday, May 20 at 6pm  
**The Beggars' Songbook: Music of the Dutch Revolt 1566-1648**

Anne Legène & Karen Burciaga, presenters

Four hundred years ago, the Pilgrims sailed to New England. A lesser-known chapter of their journey is the decade they spent in the Netherlands during the Twelve Years' Truce, a time of peace and prosperity amid the otherwise turbulent Dutch Revolt against Spanish rule. In this lecture-concert, we explore music of the decades leading up to the Pilgrims' stay in the garrison town of Leiden, as well as the religious and political climate that led to their eventual departure in 1620. Musical examples will include Dutch songs of rebellion, Spanish works, and traditional English tunes performed by Long & Away on viola da gamba, voices, recorder, and lute.

Presented by New England Historical Genealogical Society  
Online; registration details coming soon!  
<https://www.americanancestors.org/education/online-classes>  
[www.longandaway.com](http://www.longandaway.com)

#### **Soundjack, Jamulus, JamKazam**

There are a number of different Low Latency computer programs that Gamba players are using to make music together when they can't go to other people's houses. These allow people to play music in real time with two or more friends over an internet connection. The three most popular are called Soundjack, Jamulus and JamKazam. A silver lining of the COVID pandemic is that it has given us an opportunity to learn how to use new technologies that break down the barriers of distance in music making. Even once we can meet again in people's houses we will be able to use this technology to play with people who live farther away and with whom we might not get to play as often. More information about all three programs is available on our website. Two of our members, John Thier and Glen Legere, with Greg Valenzuela, have written a comprehensive article about the program Soundjack. Visit <https://vdgsne.org/2021/03/25/soundjack-resources/>